

NSC BRIEFING

9 September 1958

MIDDLE EAST

- I. In Lebanon despite the easing since 4 September of the rebel-enforced general strike most opposition forces still stress that the rebellion will continue until the opposition's demands for political "reform" are met by the government to be installed by President-elect Shihab on 24 September.
 - A. The partial lifting of the strike resulted from Shihab's agreement to several opposition demands, including appointment of Rashid Karame, Tripoli rebel leader, as Prime Minister in the next cabinet.
 1. The opposition also insists that after Shihab is installed he and parliament amend the constitution to limit presidential powers.
 - B. Factional squabbling has meanwhile broken out among the rebels, primarily as a result of extremists' unwillingness to cooperate with the rebel majority in making gestures to Shihab in order to expedite withdrawal of US forces.
 1. Despite withdrawal of possibly half of a total of 300 UAR military personnel from rebel-held areas in Beirut, UAR aid to rebels continues on a reduced scale.

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C. Pro-Chamoun forces are seeking more arms with the intention of preventing Shihab from yielding too much to opposition pressure. Pro-Chamoun extremists may attempt to prolong the crisis in order to prevent withdrawal of American troops.

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III. Meanwhile, UN Secretary General Hammarskjold, during his Cairo talks, found Nasir in a "foul mood," as well as aggressive and unyielding. Nasir indicated he would not be willing to meet King Husayn's desire for assurances of non-interference in Jordan before Husayn agrees to withdrawal of British troops.

A. Cairo has taken the position that the UN General Assembly's Middle East resolution on 21 August was intended essentially to expedite withdrawal of foreign troops, and has warned that severe tensions would reappear if withdrawal were not speedily arranged.

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- B. Jordan's Prime Minister Rifai considers that the Hammarskjold mission has failed, and sees no recourse but to return the problem to the UNGA.
- C. Despite an official silence Hammarskjold as early as 1 September reportedly felt extremely pessimistic about his Middle Eastern trip.
- IV. The Moroccan and Tunisian decision to join the Arab League gives Nasir another significant victory. Membership in the Egyptian-dominated League will then include all independent Arab states--including those which in the past have opposed him.
- A. Tunisian leader Bourguiba, who had hoped to develop a bloc to bar Egyptian domination of North African Arab states, apparently no longer dares to stand aloof from Nasir's League.
- B. The two new members were in part persuaded to join the League by Iraq's foreign minister--possibly in an attempt to counter Cairo's efforts to dominate member states.
1. Tunisia and Morocco will both remain cautious in their dealings with Nasir but Nasir appears increasingly to be without public challenge in the Arab world.
- C. Nasir's ^{expanding} ~~increasing~~ influence in North African affairs may result in the Algerian rebels setting up a provisional government and being taken into the League.

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V. Cairo appears striving to increase its influence in the Iraqi armed forces by offering large-scale delivery of Soviet bloc arms from UAR stocks, as well as the stationing of an Egyptian jet fighter squadron at Iraq's Habbaniya airfield.

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B. Increased Egyptian influence in the Iraqi armed forces could be exploited to strengthen the position of the Iraqi faction, led by Deputy Prime Minister Arif, which favors membership in the UAR.

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